ZINE LIBRARIANS

CODE OF ETHICS ZINE

Dear Friends,

This document emerges from years of challenging and joyous conversations about the work we do with zines. As caretakers of these materials, in our roles as librarians and archivists —independent, public and academic alike—we believe in a set of core values that inform and guide our work. We disseminate those values here in order to communicate openly and build trust.

This document aims to support you in asking questions, rather than to provide definitive answers. Guidelines may not apply uniformly to every situation, but include discussion of disputed points. This gives zine librarians and archivists ideas about what has been challenging in the past and how other zine custodians have dealt with those issues. These points can guide conversations with users, institutions, authors, donors, and communities—including other zine librarians and archivists.

The Zine Librarians Code of Ethics is a tool to be used for acquiring, managing, preserving, and making accessible zines in a library setting, whether the collection is housed in a public, academic, or special library; an archives; or a basement. It is not intended to be proscriptive or the absolute word on the subject.

We started drafting this at the 2014 Zine Librarians (un)Conference in Durham, NC and worked on it collaboratively over time and space. This is a snapshot of a living movement. We expect the Zine Librarians Code of Ethics to change over time, adapting as zine community mores evolve. Your feedback is welcome and wanted. zinepavilion@gmail.com

Created by: Heidy Berthoud, Joshua Barton, Jeremy Brett, Lisa Darms, Violet Fox, Jenna Freedman, Jennifer LaSuprema Hecker, Lillian Karabaic, Rhonda Kauffman, Kelly McElroy, Milo Miller, Honor Moody, Jude Vachon, Madeline Veitch, Celina Williams, and Kelly Wooten (who clip-arted the hell out of this zine)

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(In case you want to CATALOG this zine or something nerdy like that.)

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http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/
Translation: Share it! Adapt it! Attribute and Cite!
Print it out and give it away for free (don't charge)! Seriously!

PREAMBLE

We, the community of zine librarians and archivists believe that:

BECAUSE zines are often produced by members of marginalized communities,

BECAUSE we strive to respectfully engage with and represent those communities,

BECAUSE librarians/archivists are often part of the communities that make/read zines,

BECAUSE the material itself, so beautifully and wonderfully varied, is often weird, ephemeral, magical, dangerous, and emotional,

BECAUSE we reject the myth of library/archival 'neutrality',

THEREFORE we want to be accountable to our users, our institutions, our authors, donors, and communities

Acquisition & Collection Development

1. Not All Methods of Acquisition Are Equal.

Libraries and archives can acquire zines through donations or purchases. Many institutions have small (or non-existent) budgets for zine acquisitions, and will therefore rely heavily on donation; we believe this to be perfectly acceptable and in keeping with the generous spirit of donors towards cultural institutions. However we also believe that institutions should strive when possible to purchase zines.

Because of the non-profit nature of zines, the creators of zines often lose money (or barely break even). Financially supporting zinesters by purchasing their creations can help sustain their ability to keep making zines. Moreover, purchasing zines demonstrates respect for the value of the zinester's work.

P.S. In addition to a collection development policy, other policies should be in place. Any institution should be able to answer questions about how these materials will be managed during their life on the shelf. As with any other form, zines will require policies on issues such as how to handle duplicate titles, or when weeding is appropriate.

The following methods of acquisitions are rated in order of preference:

Purchasing directly from the author or publisher.
Though it can be a bit more work to acquire zines this way, it ensures that all profits go directly to the author or publisher.

Purchasing from a zine distributor (distro).
Zine distros are small distributors who buy zines from authors or publishers at a discount then resell them. Though distros can help streamline the acquisitions process, zine authors/publishers get a smaller cut of the profits when zines are purchased this way.

Receiving donations from the author or publisher.

Receiving donations from third parties.
It can be difficult to determine where the donor acquired their zines, so this can be an ethical quandary.

Creating unauthorized copies.
While some zinesters see no problem with this, especially for out of print materials, many others find it unacceptable and see it as a breach of trust.

Purchasing from an unauthorized third party. This might include purchasing items from other collectors or sellers online. Some zinesters find it objectionable when others sell their work for profit, while some do not. Collecting institutions should strive to understand the motives and desires of the zinesters when making purchase decisions.

2. Whenever possible, it is important to give creators the right of refusal if they do not wish their work to be highly visible.

Because of the often highly personal content of zines, creators may object to having their material being publicly accessible. Zinesters (especially those who created zines before the Internet era) typically create their work without thought to their work ending up in institutions or being read by large numbers of people. To some, exposure to a wider audience is exciting, but others may find it unwelcome. For example, a zinester who wrote about questioning their sexuality as a young person in a zine distributed to their friends may object to having that material available to patrons in a library, or a particular zinester, as a countercultural creator, may object to having their zine in a government or academic institution.

When purchasing zines directly from authors or publishers, or when soliciting donations for an institution, it is ethical (and considerate) to note that the materials will be available to the broader public. This is easily achieved with a quick word when acquiring materials in person, or with an email or note in the comments section of an online form when purchasing online. This courtesy may not be necessary when purchasing from a distro; if creators have placed their work with one, there is typically an expectation that there will be a wider viewing public.

Still, this only addresses acquisitions of current materials. As alluded to above in the section on acquiring zines, third party donations can be tricky, particularly when the creators may be difficult, or impossible, to track. While it might be an admirable goal to ask permission of zinesters to include their work in a library/archives, or at least inform them that their work is in a particular collection, this may require intensive efforts, depending on the size (and age) of the donation. The librarian/archivist will have to gauge the importance of maintaining good relations with zinesters against the time and resources involved in making and retaining contact.

For libraries and archives that accept third party donations, it may be most important that all parties involved simply act in good faith. And if there are qualms about a certain donation, or about third party donations in general, it is always an option to not accept the zine(s) into the collection.

3. You should have a thoughtful collection development policy in place.

Having a publicly-accessible collection development policy specifically for your zine collection is highly recommended. The definition of what constitutes a "zine" is nebulous, so having parameters spelled out can help prevent unrelated materials from creeping into a collection (for example, political newsletters, literary journals, or brochures) when they are unwanted.

A collection development policy is a set of rules or guidelines that determine the focus of your zine library collection. A written policy allows an institution to seek out certain zines that fall within scope while being able to confidently reject material that doesn't.

Because of the unlimited subjects that zines can be about, a collection development policy statement may include specific areas of interest for developing (for example, zines by locals). An effective policy might describe the core collection as well as special interests and exclusions.

4. Zine librarians/archivists should strive to promote a variety of viewpoints in the zines in their collection.

The very heart of zines is their ability to give voice to those who are not traditionally represented in libraries/archives, so it is vital whenever possible to include zines from underrepresented populations, with consideration to zines created by people of different races/ethnicities, genders, classes, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and so on.

1. Access to zines in libraries and archives carries an inherent tension.

As librarians and archivists, we have a responsibility to respect the professional and ethical traditions of reasonable and equitable access to materials.

As cultural advocates who strive to positively and respectfully engage with the creative communities we document, we also have a responsibility to consider personal and privacy concerns of zine creators.

Because these two responsibilities may come into conflict, zine librarians and archivists should consider the principles in this section of the Code with respect to access to materials in their care. Zine libraries/archives will inevitably take different approaches, some emphasizing preservation, others leaning more toward access. However, regardless of the librarian's/archivist's approach, one should always be willing to consider a zine maker's requests for how their work is identified or otherwise treated.

2. Sensitivity to both creator and creation is paramount in zine librarianship.

Zine librarians and archivists are therefore sensitive to the environments in which zines are created and distributed. We should consult with zine creators and communities and respect the desires for autonomy and privacy of those creators and communities. We should not expose the legal identities of zine creators in cases where those identities are not explicitly noted in the zines themselves. We want zine makers to feel safe having their zines in our libraries.

3. Unusable materials are useless materials.

Zine librarians and archivists should strive towards the highest practical degree of access to the zines in our care within the context of our institutional missions and populations. When we interact with zine creators and donors we should provide a balance between reader/researcher access and zine creators' wants and needs regarding privacy.

Zine librarians/archivists should make every effort to create environments that are physically and emotionally accessible. Whether or not the institution a zine librarian is housed within, if there is a larger institution, has a safer spaces policy, zine libraries should always be sensitive to issues of, among other things, race, class, gender, sexuality, physical disability, and mental/emotional health.

Zine librarians/archivists' overarching goal is to facilitate the recognition of zines as legitimate cultural artifacts documenting 20th- and 21st-century lives. To that end, we should do our best to preserve them and make them accessible to future readers and researchers, via physical access and description. We should be sensitive to how the needs and wants of zine creators can conflict with those of scholars, journalists, and people who read zines for pleasure and do our best to find a balance, working in concert with our constituents: zine makers and zine readers.

PRESERVATION

The special nature of zines should be considered as part of preservation

Given the ephemeral nature of zines, any zine may be a one- or few-of-a-kind item. Proper preservation of materials that meets the needs and requirements of an institution or zine-collecting body should be used in order to keep zines in proper condition, whether they are circulating or not. Zine library preservation practices run a full spectrum, from little-to-no active preservation, to housing them in acid-free folders and boxes or plastic envelopes. The key is to find what level of preservation fits the use and budget of the collection.

It is also important to note that many zine purchases come with "extras" that libraries or archives may not be accustomed to receiving. These "extras" may include free zines, pins, stickers, hand-written notes, and elaborately decorated envelopes. It is important to consider if these items will be saved, and if so, to make sure that staff who deal with receiving are aware that certain pieces will require special handling. For instance, these additional materials may be discarded, shelved or housed with the zine, or housed separately from the zine in its own collection.

USE

Whereas we define access as engaging with zines online or in physical locations such as zine libraries/archives or at zine fairs, use in this Code refers to the reproduction of zines or quoting from zines in another source. Reproduction can include copying zines in their original formats and redistributing them; printing portions in books; or any kind of online sharing, from comprehensive archival projects, to publishing images in online newspapers, blogs, or any form of social media. This section of the Code is a guide through questions of zine usage, as well as providing best practices and ethics regarding copyright and permissions.

Copyright

Copyleft

Creative Commons

1. Zines have copyright just like more traditionally published materials.

The U.S. copyright code allows librarians/archivists to make copies for researchers to use for their own research. This assumes, of course, that the materials won't be shared or again reproduced in any way. If further reproduction is required (for example, for exhibits) copyright law requires that permission be sought from authors. If reproduction is for educational purposes or significantly transforming the original, this may fall under Fair Use (discussed ahead).

2. Zine usage has a particular context or contexts associated with it.

In our experience, reproducing or sharing zines involves not just copyright law and practices, but also zinesters' inherent right to decide how their work is distributed and how widely, and how it is contextualized. In sum, it is about community, about respect, and about the simple act of being a considerate person and information professional.

Zines are not mass-distributed books. They are often self-published and self-distributed, printed in very small runs, and intended for a small audience. Zinesters may feel differently about having their work openly available on the internet or in print, made available to a much wider audience.

Some zinesters also feel that context is important. This can mean the format – that it was meant to be on paper, and held in the hands – or it can mean that the zine "works" best when it is read as a whole product, rather than having one or a few pages excerpted or reprinted. These are among the considerations that the zine librarian/archivist should observe when deciding how or whether to reproduce an item for use.

3. Seeking permissions for zine usage can be complex, but remains an important step.

There are many different uses of zines for which one should seek permission. For students and researchers who want to use excerpts or even images in an academic paper that is not going to be published in print or online, a citation is usually enough. If one wants to publish an image from a zine in print or online, we recommend obtaining permission from authors. There are some gray areas or casual uses for which zinesters may not usually request advance permission, for instance, posting a picture from a zine or a zine cover on social media or in a blog, usually with a short credit including the title of the zine and/or the author. Copying an entire zine, even for personal use, is generally not a respectful practice unless the creator specifies permission or produces a zine under an appropriate Creative Commons license.

Researchers or journalists writing extensively about a particular zine creator or community should get in touch with the relevant people directly, when possible. The zine library/archives holding their works is not a proxy for the people who created them, but librarians/archivists can and should direct researchers towards those creators when they can.

Whenever a zine is reproduced or described online, in social media, in a library catalog or website, or other venue, if the zine creator(s) contacts the holding institution and requests that the content be removed or edited, we recommend respecting their wishes. It may be possible to argue fair use based on these principles:

- ✂ the purpose of the use;
- ✂ the nature of the work used;
- ✂ the amount and substantiality of the work used; and
- ✂ the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the work used.

However, in the name of community respect, we advise getting explicit permission whenever possible.

Document all efforts to contact the person or persons. If this is a project with multiple zines that require permission, use a spreadsheet to keep track of attempts at contact. This will not provide complete legal protection, but it is important to do due diligence in this process. If a zine has more than one author, the editor may need to be contacted (if there is one clear person in this role) as well as the creator of the content. Locating one of those people will most likely lead to the others. Sometimes if a zine was created collectively, one person may feel authorized to speak for the group, and in other cases, they may wish to each individually give permission for the usage.

Suggested Process for Obtaining Permissions

What does asking for permission mean? If publishing a book or academic article, the editor or publisher may provide an official form to get a signature. One's own form can suffice if one is working independently. Such a form should include the following information:

- ✂ Name, address, telephone number, and email address.
- ✂ Title/position and name of affiliated institution, if any.
- ✂ The date of the request.
- ✂ A complete and accurate citation.
- ✂ A precise description of the proposed use of the copyrighted material as well as when and for how long the material will be used.
- ✂ A signature line for the copyright holder (including their title if they are representing a company) and the date.

Tracking down the creator of a zine can be difficult, particularly for those published in the 1990s (pre-internet/email times) or under a pseudonym. If contact info is available on the zine itself, try using that, or searching online for an email address, blog, social media account, etc., to make the request. The Zine Librarians e-mail list or other online forums may be helpful in tracking down people.

https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/zinelibrarians/info

ORGANIZATION

This section aims to help librarians/archivists think through some of the implications of making zines accessible via the core library/archival functions of cataloging, organizing or describing.

1. The zine environment requires careful thought before embarking on these functions.

To echo our preamble, zines are "often weird, ephemeral, magical, dangerous, and emotional." Dangerous to whom, one might ask? It likely depends on whom one asks, but in the age of the Internet, at least one prospectively endangered population are zinesters themselves. Librarians and archivists should consider that making zines discoverable on the Web or in local catalogs and databases could have impacts on creators – anything from mild embarrassment to the divulging of dangerous personal information.

Zine librarians/archivists should strive to make zines as discoverable as possible while also respecting the safety and privacy of their creators.

2. There are several aspects of organizational/descriptive work to consider when processing zines.

Levels of Description

The more detailed descriptions provided for with zines, the more discoverable they will be. Within the specific conventions of the collecting institution, zines should be described as fully as possible, but with sensitivity to the amount of private information of living persons that might also be revealed.

Identifying Zinesters

In general, use the form of name on the piece being cataloged. If reconciling forms of names to an authority file, use care to identify sensitive cases where the author may not want their full name associated with the zine. Be prepared to receive and respond to requests to change or remove name information in catalog records for zines. We encourage, but do not mandate, deference to zine creators' wishes in this regard.

Authority Data For Zinesters

When creating authority records for zinesters, refrain from recording more personal information than is necessary or required to identify the person under the rules or conventions of the authority file.

3. Subject analysis is a fine art in zine librarianship/archiving.

As zine librarians/archivists, we make every effort to broaden access and use through the most relevant and specific subject headings, summaries, and other notes. This process is not infallible, and sometimes errors will happen, such as the use of headings that offend or do not resonate with zine creators. It is important that ways be found in the process to invite feedback and create avenues for both authors and users to request revisions to a record.

With subject analysis, note that subject terms can be controlled or uncontrolled. Controlled terms have the benefit of linking a user to larger swaths of related resources. They come from controlled vocabularies or subject thesauri like:

✂ Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)

✂ Library of Congress Genre/Form Thesaurus (LCGFT)

✂ Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), or

✂ Anchor Archive Thesaurus

In assigning subject headings to zines, we recognize that there will be imperfect fits and that catalogers must balance collocation and discoverability of materials with using the language and terminology of zine authors.

4. Subject access can be enhanced with uncontrolled terms and keyword-rich summary notes.

Beyond subject discoverability, note that when no thesauri have the right terms to address a particular issue or community represented in a zine, uncontrolled terms will at least make a record more keyword searchable. Uncontrolled terms might be terms used on the fly by the cataloger, or terms pulled from the resource itself. Getting more significant keywords or phrases in a summary note will also achieve this and give users a better sense of the zine to boot.

Additional Considerations for Zine Subject Analysis

If the zines reside within a larger collection, using some headings from the "standard" thesaurus adopted by your library or collection (e.g. Library of Congress Subject Headings, Sears) will make them more discoverable. When zines turn up alongside books, movies, and other kinds of information in a catalog search, users will have greater access to alternative perspectives.

When using a thesaurus, adhering to its documented rules for use creates better collocation, so try to use it "correctly."

Supplement more formal or established thesauri with others that provide more accurate language or greater granularity. Some examples of thesauri to look at include the zine-specific Anchor Archive Thesaurus, or the visual art-focused Art and Architecture Thesaurus.

Local headings that collocate common genres of zines can be very helpful for users looking to browse a catalog.

More thorough discussion of subject analysis for zines can be found in the 2013 article: Freedman, Jenna and Rhonda Kauffman. 2013. "Cutter and Paste: A DIY Guide for Catalogers Who Don't Know About Zines and Zine Librarians Who Don't Know About Cataloging." In *Informed Agitation: Library and Information Skills in Social Justice Movements and Beyond* edited by Melissa Morone. Library Juice Press.

http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/item/ac:171812.

Additional Resources

(because, like, you know, we're LIBRARIANS)

Giari, Katie. "Cite This Zine." [Zine] 2nd ed. New York. 2009.

https://zines.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline/citethis2010.pdf

Guide to Copyright Permissions

https://www.lib.purdue.edu/uco/Resources/permissions.html

Fair Use for Libraries

http://www.arl.org/focus-areas/copyright-ip/fair-use/code-of-best-practices#.VG9HuYvF_To

Zine Librarians E-mail List

https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/zinelibrarians/info

Zine Library Collection Policy Primer

http://zinelibraries.info/running-a-zine-library/collection-policy-primer/

Plus the text of this document and MUCH More

http://zinelibraries.info/

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